NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Protecting Parks for Future Generations

Testimony of
Craig D. Obey, Vice President
National Parks Conservation Association

RE: "The National Parks: Will they survive for future generations?"

Before the
Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources
of the House Government Reform Committee
U.S. House of Representatives

December 1, 2005

Congressman Souder, it is a privilege to be here today as we once again examine some of the significant challenges that impact the ability of the National Park Service to protect the parks and serve park visitors. My name is Craig Obey and I serve as Vice President for Government Affairs for the National Parks Conservation Association. Since 1919, the nonpartisan National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System for present and future generations. Today we have 300,000 members nationwide who visit and care deeply about our national parks.

The national parks preserve the most superlative examples of America's natural, cultural and historic resources. Each unit of the National Park System is designated for the common benefit of all the people of the United States—those of us here today and those who will come after us. This gives the National Park Service not only a stake, but also an affirmative obligation to protect the national parks in carrying out the mission entrusted to it by the American people.

Fifty-one years ago, historian Bernard De Voto said, "The progressive impairment of the parks by budgetary bloodletting is a national disgrace." Sadly, that statement remains as true today as it was in 1954. While national parks remain premier destinations for American families, all is not well for the units of the National Park System. According to the 2005 report *Faded Glory: Top 10 Reasons to Reinvest in America's National Park Heritage* released by the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) a description of conditions in our parks would include dilapidated historic buildings, education cutbacks, traffic jams, marijuana farms operated by drug cartels, forest besieged by foreign insects, dirty restrooms, and crumbling artifacts. To be sure, the National Park Service often works marvels despite limited funding. But behind the scenes – and sometimes peeking through the curtain – is a growing litany of problems caused by chronic underfunding.

1300 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036
Telephone (202) 223-NPCA (6722) • Fax (202) 659-0650

This crisis is an unfortunate reality rooted in decades of inadequate investment by successive Congresses and administrations. But we can no longer neglect our responsibility to act. The national parks represent America's heritage-our legacy to the future. Under current conditions, the future for the parks is not a bright one.

Our national parks include icons of democracy such as the Statue of Liberty, the home of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the *U.S.S. Arizona Memorial*, Fort Necessity, Little Bighorn, and Gettysburg. We are inspired by Thomas Edison's laboratory, the cliff houses at Mesa Verde, and the Seneca Falls, New York home of suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton. We bring our families to enjoy campfire stories at Toulomne Meadows in Yosemite, marvel at the temple built by King Kamehameha at Puukohola Heiau National Historic Site, and bask in the glory of a sunrise at Haleakala. Simply put, our national parks constitute the most significant natural, cultural, and historic places on the American landscape. And they remain in dire need of greater financial assistance.

Hawaii Park Funding at a Glance

The funding status of Hawaii's seven national park units is somewhat comparable to that of sites in the 48 contiguous states, Alaska, and the U.S. territories. Hawaii's national parks budgets today (FY 2006) are less than eight percent higher than they were three years ago (FY 2003), not keeping pace with inflation and other increased demands placed on the parks. While Hawaii's national parks did receive an average increase of 6.3 percent between FY 2005 and FY 2004, this increase was undermined the following year by base operating budget increases that averaged only 2.2 percent, well below the 3.1 percent rate of inflation. Individual park units, such as Hawaii Volcanoes, face a budget that is only 3.6 percent higher than it was three years ago.

The subsequent budget for FY 06 recognized the importance of maintaining a higher level of support for national park budgets to cover fixed costs. Unfortunately, that budget made no additional headway in addressing the problems plaguing our parks. An analysis of business plans developed by more than 80 national park units reveals the parks suffer from an annual shortfall in operations funding that exceeds $600 million. A maintenance backlog estimated at between $4.5 to $9.7 billion burdens the entire park system, draining critically needed funds from day-to-day core operations. And despite $50 million in recurring homeland security expenses incurred by the Park Service since September 11, 2001, the agency has not received one penny in reimbursement from the Department of Homeland Security budget.

With the current budget national parks will barely manage to tread water for another year, and this is without accounting for likely across the board cuts that may further weaken the budget. Without greater progress on funding, the crippling annual operating shortfall threatens the long-term well being of the natural and cultural heritage protected and preserved in our national parks.

The impact of chronic underfunding on Hawaii's national parks ranges from subtle to tragic. The Park Service does not have enough money to fully archive and interpret many of the extant documents that tell the stories of the men and women who were present at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Invasive species (plants and animals) are destroying the natural resources that make the islands unique. Both of these developments impact the ability of the Park Service to effectively serve as the steward and guardian of Hawaii's natural and cultural resources.

Malama ka `Aina – Caring for Hawaii's Natural and Cultural Resources "in a good way."

Native Hawaiians have a special relationship to the water, land, and sky, and to the history that ties them through generations to a specific place. To be the son or daughter of someone, to have been born and raised in a particular area, and to honor one's ancestors and colleagues through the sharing of such personal information, is equally as important (if not more crucial) to many Hawaiians than one's job title and affiliation. The spirit of malama ka `aina (care/love of the land) and the deep respect the culture bears for ancestral traditions and history make Native Hawaiians the perfect partners to help guide Park Service efforts to protect and enhance Hawaii's natural and cultural resources "in a good way."

The incredible beauty of Hawaii's natural resources, the landscapes, plants, and animals found on the islands, is relatively well known. Less well know, however, is the rich history of the native peoples thought to have reached the Hawaiian Islands around 1,000 B.C. from western Melanesia and southeastern Asia. These Polynesian explorers brought with them minimal tools and supplies. Successful settlement of the area depended jointly upon their ability to adapt to new surroundings and manipulate the new environment to better provide for the needs of the people.

Native Hawaiians developed and evolved fishing and agricultural activities as well as unique social, political, economic, and land use patterns. And from 1400 A.D. "Hawaiian society underwent a systematic transformation from its ancestral Polynesian descent-group system to a state-like society" with varying degrees of somewhat rigid stratification by class, power, and privilege. High chiefs, such as Kamehamea, reigned over a feudal system that grew increasingly complex in nature.

Accurate interpretation of Native Hawaiian culture and history is no easy task. For instance, Native Hawaiians recognized at least five different types of fishponds and fish traps. These were the structures and devices that allowed islanders to catch, hold, and harvest fish throughout the year. The ponds were constructed with regard to certain guidelines and used in very specific ways, and capturing that kind of detail ensures that native culture will be represented in a truly respectful fashion. Involving Native Hawaiians in shaping the public face of their history is the best way to make sure that the Park Service gets it right.

Fortunately, in Hawaii, the development of partnerships between Park Service staff and Native Hawaiians is a well-established way of conducting business. For example, at Haleakala

National Park, the Kipahulu `Ohana (a non-profit cultural organization) have a formal cooperative agreement with the Park Service (signed in 1995 and recently extended to 2008) to provide assistance with interpretive displays, outreach, and programs, that celebrate traditional Hawaiian culture. Kipahulu `Ohana were awarded a $45,000 grant from the Office of Hawaii Affairs in 2004, to support the organization's Kapahu Living Farm project, where over an acre of ancient taro patches (within park boundaries) have been cleared, restored and returned to traditional organic production use and a traditional hale serves as a space for educational activities. And at Kaloko-Honokohau National Historical Park (Kailua Kona, HI) the Park Service and leaders from the Hawaiian community formed an advisory council, which has assisted in the redesign of the park's brochure and the development of a live-in culture/education center.

Insufficient funding does, however, have adverse impacts on the ability of these partnerships to effectively serve as stewards of Hawaii's cultural resources. For instance, the $3.6 million required to construct a new curatorial facility for the Park Service at Kaloko-Hanokohau remains an unfunded line item on a PMIS list. This facility would house both artifacts and natural resources and would act as the key curatorial facility for all Hawaii national parks. Existing facilities do not provide state of the art protection for the valuable resources they house.

Support and leadership from community members is a vital component of the Park Service's ability to adequately and accurately preserve and interpret the native culture of Hawaii. These are valuable relationships based upon trust and a belief on the part of many in the community that their cultural resources and ancestral heritage will be preserved and protected in a respectful and honorable way. Hawaii's national parks must have sufficient staff and resources to conduct community outreach and form effective partnerships, or risk losing some of that hard-earned trust.

The Sinking Memorial

The troubles facing the *U.S.S. Arizona Memorial* have been relatively well documented. When the memorial first opened in 1980, the state of the art complex was designed to accommodate 750,000 visitors annually. The site currently draws double that number and is the most visited Park Service site in the Pacific. Visitors must often contend with long lines and crowded conditions at the memorial.

In addition, the *U.S.S. Arizona* Memorial has been sinking for several years. Some parts of the memorial's structure have settled as much as 30 inches producing numerous cracks in the foundation. Water pools several inches deep collect in the basement after some rainstorms, and the pilings used to elevate and shore up the structure have been raised as far as possible.

Plans are in place to construct a replacement visitor center. The new structure will cost $34 million. The U.S. Navy, which jointly manages the current memorial with the Park Service, expects to award a design and engineering contract soon, with ground breaking for the project set

to begin in March of 2007. Private philanthropy has already raised $11 million and planners are hopeful that additional fund raising campaigns (the state of Arizona will raise funds to support construction costs throughout 2006) and congressional appropriations will account for the outstanding balance.

While federal, state, and private interests pursue the larger funding goals related to the construction a new *U.S.S. Arizona* Memorial visitor center, it is worth noting that a significant number of smaller investments from the park's Project Management Inventory System (PMIS) remain unfunded. The list includes a cultural landscapes inventory, research on U.S.S. Arizona casualties, U.S.S. Arizona GIS database development, and the cataloging of the Pearl Harbor Survivor's Collection.

We expect the Navy and the Park Service will build and manage a world-class memorial befitting the service members who lost their lives on December 7, 1941. Our concern is that the less prestigious but vitally important support projects that will imbue the memorial with a profound sense of spirit and relevance will be sacrificed to accommodate a restrictive bottom line. Any consideration of funding for the *U.S.S. Arizona* Memorial must ensure that the Park Service receives enough money to commemorate the legacy of the 1,177 service members who gave the this country their last full measure of devotion. Anything less should be regarded as a half step.

Inherit the Weeds: Invasive Species Cause Trouble in Paradise

According to Park Service documents, Hawaii is the "leading state for both extinctions and federally listed endangered species." Invasive plants and animals such as coqui frogs, faya tree, miconia, feral pigs, fire tree, and nettle catepillars (newcomers like red fire ants and brown tree snakes could be on the way), are having a devastating impact upon their native counterparts. More than just nuisances, these invasive species are destroying vital plants, animals, and other organisms that make up Hawaii's unique and diverse eco-system.

Some of the invasive plants and animals that now threaten Hawaii's unique eco-system arrived naturally as "hitchhikers" on horticultural and agricultural imports. Many, however, were introduced intentionally in what Lloyd Loope, research scientist at the USGS, Pacific Island Ecosystems Research Center, referred to in testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on National Parks (August 2005) as a "barrage of invasive non-native species introduction." The threat from invasives is so severe that scientists are greatly concerned that Hawaii's national parks may be losing the race to protect and preserve their natural resources.

The Hawaiian Islands showcase the kind of detrimental impact human beings can have on their environment. Native plants and animals that flourished on these isolated islands for ages have, in the last 200 hundred years, fallen into precipitous decline due to the introduction of non-native invasives and feral animals. Humans brought some of these invasives to the islands unintentionally, while others arrived in quite deliberate fashion. As a result of the onslaught some populations of endemic plants have gone completely extinct.

The speed with which an invasive species can destroy endemic organisms is alarming and was highlighted earlier this year by the arrival of the *Erythrina* gall wasp. The gall wasp first appeared on Oahu in April 2005. This tiny insect has a voracious appetite for the native wiliwili seeds and in seven months has managed to take this "bullet proof" Hawaiian mainstay to the brink of extinction. The list of other endangered, endemic plants includes hala, hau kuahiwi, and Hawaii's `ohi`a trees, which constitute over 80 percent of Hawaii's "still-intact forest."

But even slow-moving invasives such as Miconia can have a devastating impact on the landscape. According to Defenders of Wildlife, Miconia is a shrub that was introduced on the islands in the 1960s as an ornamental. Today, Miconia infests over 11,000 acres of Hawaii, Oahu, Maui, and Kauai, growing in dense clusters with shallow roots that block sunlight and choke off endemic plants and grasses. Ground covered by Miconia is prone to erosion and the shrubs have caused some landslides.

The strategy of setting aside protected areas will no longer suffice as a mechanism for coping with invasives. In an age when planes, ferries, cargo ships, and automobiles can rapidly introduce and spread non-native species into all parts of the Hawaiian Islands, a defensive strategy based on reacting to new threats is the easiest way to lose the struggle against non-native species. Prevention of the spread of invasives must begin outside park boundaries and be accompanied by aggressive removal of feral animals and non-native plants followed by the reintroduction of native species.

This approach is, however, quite resource intensive and requires that Park Service resource management teams be given the authority to join or develop partnerships outside park boundaries, and provide financial assistance to support such initiatives aimed at eradicating invasives. Greater cooperation from other federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Homeland Security, must also be increased, as these agencies help control ports of entry and enforce health and safety regulations on imports.

Battling Invasives at Haleakala and Hawaii Volcanoes

Park friends groups are already providing the Park Service with a margin of support in the battle against invasive species. The Friends of Haleakala National Park offer regularly scheduled service days and overnight service trips where volunteers can help rid the park of invasives such as plantago. But their capacity falls well short of what is needed to effectively deal with exotic species management.

At Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, the struggle to protect the park against invasive species has taken on new dimensions with the acquisition of the Kahuku Ranchland. Hawaii Volcanoes was the 12th addition to the National Park System when it was established in 1916. The park protects the Earth's most massive volcano, Mauna Loa at 13,677 ft., and its most active volcano, Kilauea. The unique ecosystem found within the park and the intriguing Hawaiian

culture that has long been associated with the ever-changing landscape contributed to the park's recognition as an International Biosphere Reserve in 1980 and a World Heritage Site in 1987.

In 2004, Hawaii Volcanoes expanded by 115,788 acres or 56 percent. The addition of the Kahuku Ranchland opened areas that had been closed to the public for over 100 years and allowed the National Park Service to assume management authority over territory containing numerous endangered and invasive species. Acquisition of the Kahuku Ranchland District was the largest conservation deal in the history of the state. Lost in the magnitude of this important addition to the park was the presence of fountain grass, in increasing numbers, in the Kahuku district.

Fountain grass is an invasive exotic that the Park Service has been battling for the last 15 years. The grass is a very aggressive, drought resistant weed that was declared "noxious" by the state Department of Agriculture. This invasive is so adaptable that it has even been spotted growing in young lava flows.

Fountain grass can quickly whither and even more rapidly regenerate. As new grass fills in the dead plant material accumulates and forms dangerous fuel for wildfires. According to the *Honolulu Advertiser*, the cause of an August 2005 brush fire that burned 25,000 acres and forced the evacuation of thousands of residents from Waikoloa, was fountain grass. Managers in Hawai'i County spend more than $500,000 a year to eradicate this dangerous invasive.

Park Service staff at Hawaii Volcanoes believed encroachment by fountain grass had been a manageable problem. Although 50,000 to 100,000 acres of parkland is covered by fountain grass, the weeds tend to grow in low-density, isolated clusters. Park staff monitored the location of fountain grass stands by aerial surveys, and efforts to reduce the invasive have led to a sharp drop in the fountain grass population at Hawaii Volcanoes. Then came the new acquisition and additional stands of fountain grass.

The Kahuku Ranchland purchase provided the Park Service with a wonderful opportunity and huge challenge. The acquisition of 116,000 new acres meant the agency gained the authority to design and implement resource management protocols to eliminate fountain grass and other exotic invasives on lands previously off limits to the agency. The challenge is that the park must tackle the fountain grass problem while facing a $5 million (or 37%) operations shortfall (recorded for FY 04) that limits the resources (staff, money, and time) that the Park Service can devote to resolving the issue.

Hawaii Volcanoes needs increased funding to manage the threat posed by fountain grass and other invasive species. Otherwise, the acquisition of the Kahuku Ranchland will become less a legacy, than an inheritance of weeds.

According to NPCA's 2005 *Faded Glory: Top 10 Reasons to Reinvest in America's National Park Heritage* report, the National Park Service, since 1999, has effectively controlled exotic plant species on more than 167,000 acres-but 2.6 million acres remain infested.

Recognizing the need to strengthen funding for natural resource management in the parks, Congress established the Natural Resource Challenge in 1999. The program was meant to help fund initiatives addressing the most critical threats to national parks, including encroachment by non-native and invasive species. Unfortunately, the Natural Resource Challenge, like many aspects of the Park Service budget, at $81 million, remains chronically underfunded. In the meantime, invasive species overrun our national parks and, as has been demonstrated in Hawaii, destroy the natural resources that make these places unique.

Crowded Vistas and Sinking Memorials Mar the Visitor Experience

Haleakala has an approximate base operations budget of $4 million and a staff of about 68 FTEs. The park, which recorded 1,455,477 recreational visits in 2004, suffers from overcrowding at top attractions, such as the summit at sunrise, and a staff shortage, especially in public interpretation of this breathtaking park.

At the park's summit, which is 10,000 feet in elevation, bus and vanloads of tourists arrive in the pre-dawn hours to watch the sunrise. The temperatures can be surprisingly cold and many are poorly dressed for the weather. Some visitors, bussed directly from cruise ships, don't even realize that they are in a national park. Parking space is limited and the crowds can be large – as many as 1,000 people crowding onto the summit at one time. Nonetheless, the park can only afford to keep one law enforcement ranger at the summit during peak hours.

After the sunrise, the crowds depart in a mass exodus. Many descend from the summit on rented bicycles provided by tour companies. These descents can be chaotic with tourists careening down steep, winding mountain roads that are often wet and treacherous. Many Native Hawaiians attach a deep spiritual meaning to watching the sunrise at Haleakala. Overcrowding the summit at daybreak and then setting loose scores of riders bent on racing to the bottom greatly undermines experiencing this culturally significant site.

To address the crowding and its impacts on the resources (trampling of vegetation at the summit, medical emergencies, etc) the park has instituted an interim operations plan to limit the numbers of busses and vans bringing up visitors each morning. But a longer term, practical solution is necessary. Certainly, increasing Haleakala's budget so that the park could increase the number of staff available to manage traffic congestion in the parking lots, educate visitors, and better protect their safety would be a good step.

National Parks Air Tours Management Act Background

Congress passed the National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000 more than two years ago. This groundbreaking legislation was sponsored by Senator John McCain of Arizona and cosponsored by Senator Daniel Akaka of Hawaii. The Act instructs the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the National Park Service to work together to develop air tour management plans for parks where commercial air tours occur. The FAA is the lead agency responsible for implementing the Act, although the Park Service is a designated cooperating

agency and the Park Service director must co-sign, with the FAA Administrator, the Record of Decision for every parks air tour management plan.

The National Parks Air Tour Management Act was groundbreaking legislation based directly on the recommendations of the National Parks Overflight Working Group, an advisory group composed of general aviation, air tour, environmental, and American Indian representatives. This consensus-based solution introduced a proactive, system wide, cooperative process to enable FAA and the Park Service to manage the increasing activity of commercial air tours, which can detract from park values and disturb park visitors.

However, in the more than five and a half years since the passage of the Parks Air Tour Management Act, the FAA and Park Service have not yet completed a single air tour management plan. The delay in implementation was disturbing enough to Hawaii's Senator Akaka and a number of his fellow senators that they asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to investigate the FAA and Park Service's work to date on the parks air tour act. The GAO has passed a draft of this report to the FAA and the Park Service and expects to issue a final report early in 2006. The findings of that report could have a significant impact on Hawaii's national parks.

Air Tours in Hawaii's National Parks

The parks in Hawaii, which experience some of the highest volume of air tour overflights in the park system, were the first units to start the air tour management planning process and are in the midst of it currently. Hawaii Volcanoes completed the scoping for an Environmental Impact Statement in September and Haleakala and Kalaupapa are re-issuing an Environmental Assessment for their air tour plan. While these planning processes are not yet complete, the operators who were flying air tours over these parks when the law was passed in 2000 are able to continue operating under Interim Operating Authority (IOA).

It was clear that Congress created Interim Operating Authority to ensure that pre-existing air tour operations would not be interrupted during the park air tour management planning process. Congress likely did not contemplate, however, that so many years would pass before any parks completed air tour management plans. At the current rate of progress, most parks are likely to be operating under IOA for years to come.

According to the Air Tour Management Planning and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Scoping Notice for Hawaii Volcanoes issues on August 1, 2005, there are currently 14 existing operators providing commercial air tours over and within a half-mile of the boundary of the Hawai`i Volcanoes. As of July 15, 2005, these 14 existing operators have Interim Operating Authority to conduct a maximum of 28,441 commercial air operations annually. According to the scoping notice for the air tour management planning and NEPA process of Haleakala National Park, issued in March of 2004, there are currently ten existing operators who provide commercial air tours over and within a half-mile outside the boundary of the Haleakala National

Park. Together, these ten air tour operators over Haleakala claim to fly approximately 26,325 commercial air tour operations each year.

We are alarmed at these very high numbers of overflights being claimed over Hawaii Volcanoes and Haleakala. If these overflight numbers at each park are accurate, Hawaii Volcanoes is experiencing an average of 77 air tour overflights a day and Haleakala experiences an average of 72 air tour overflight a day. As is noted in the scoping document, the Park Service staff at Hawai`i Volcanoes indicate that the number of operations reported in IOA applications is vastly different from the number of operations observed by the agency. In fact, the number of overflights claimed by operators is much greater than the number of overflights that operators are currently reporting under the standing overflight fee arrangement in place at each park.[1] One explanation for this discrepancy could be that the existing fee agreement requires payment only for air tour overflights that fly directly over that park and the air tour management act applies to airspace directly above and within one half-mile of the parks boundary, but NPCA feels more investigation is necessary on the part of the FAA and the Park Service.

This raises an air tour management issue about which NPCA has deep concerns: When determining what number of air tours to authorize over a park, whether under the Interim Operating Authority or the final air tour management plans, the FAA is relying mainly on the unverified claims air tour operators. The FAA has never required air tour operators to keep records of their flights over national parks so there is little, if any, data that can be used to corroborate the claims of overflight numbers over parks that many operators are making now.

In order to gather more information on overflight numbers, the FAA posted in the Federal Register the numbers of air tour overflights being claimed over every park in the Park System that is covered by the Air Tour Management Act. The comment period for this notice closed recently, and it may yield information that will allow the FAA and Park Service to amend the numbers of overflights permitted under current IOA. But the public and the park visitors who seek natural quiet and peaceful refuge in these parks are at a distinct disadvantage in this process. They have no way to verify independently the true existing number of air tours over these parks, and therefore have no point of reference on how to gauge what level of air tour operations is causing the noise and visual impacts they may be experiencing on the ground. If the National Parks Air Tour Management Act is going to be effectively enforced at the Hawaii parks and at more than 100 other parks throughout the country where air tour overflights are reported, the FAA and the Park Service must strive to find a more reliable and open way to determine the number of air tours currently occurring over parks.

[1] For both Hawai`i Volcanoes and Haleakala National Parks, commercial air tour operations conducted over the parks are assessed a fee by the NPS under authority provided in 16 U.S.C. 4601-6a (n)(5)(B). The fee assessed per entry is $25.00 per aircraft with a passenger capacity of 25 persons or less and $50.00 per aircraft with a passenger capacity of more than 25 persons. This fee is only assessed on air tour operations that enter the airspace above the park (within the park boundary). Commercial air tour operations that are conducted in the vicinity of the park but which do not cross the park's boundary are not assessed this fee.

1300 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036
Telephone (202) 223-NPCA (6722) • Fax (202) 659-0650

Another large area of concern for NPCA is the issue of the determination of air tour overflights' impacts on park visitors and park resources. The 2000 law clearly states that the FAA and the Park Service are to retain their jurisdictions in this process. The FAA ensures the safety of the skies, showing air tour pilots exactly where and when they can fly and the Park Service must protect every parks unique resources and the right of every park visitor to experience an unimpaired park.

In other words, the Park Service cannot tell the FAA how to fly a plane and the FAA cannot tell the Park Service how to protect the parks. But unfortunately, the question of which agency has the ultimate say in determining whether an air tour overflight is having an adverse impact on a park, and what level of impact it may be having, is one that has impeded cooperation between FAA and the Park Service. If Congress wants to ensure that the original intent of its forward-looking park air tour law is followed, FAA must publicly recognize the Park Service's authority to determine if and how air tours are impacting national park resources and visitors.

The planning for management of commercial air tours of Hawaii Volcanoes and Haleakala is a complex issue that is costing the parks and the Park Service much time and effort. Both parks offer fascinating sites for visitors on the ground and air tour passengers; and both parks have rare natural and cultural resources to protect, their significance to native Hawaiian beliefs being one of the most critical to Hawaiians.

The slopes and summits of Mauna Loa and Kilauea Volcanoes, two of the world's most active volcanoes, dominate Hawai`i Volcanoes attract many commercial air tour overflights every day. Mauna Loa is the world's largest volcano, measuring more than 56,000 ft from sea floor to the summit. (From sea level to the summit it is 13,699 ft tall). The other volcano, Kilauea, is the most active volcano in the world today and is considered by Native Hawaiians to be the home of the fire goddess Pele, who believe that her presence is manifested throughout the park.

Historically, Native Hawaiians have an association with the area now encompassed by the park that pre-dates park establishment by nearly 1500 years. This association is demonstrated through Native Hawaiian traditions, beliefs, practices, lifeways, arts, crafts, and social institutions, which have been passed down through the generations. Kilauea has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its association with Native Hawaiians, in addition to the volcano's association to science. Native Hawaiians consider red lava to be sacred; however, the Native Hawaiian association extends beyond the land. In Native Hawaiian thinking, the sacredness of a place is not only found on the ground on which one walks, but also includes the heavens above. There are nine specific terms designating the divisions of air space. Native Hawaiians are also deeply aware of the sounds of nature. Natural sounds of the ocean, winds, birds, rain, trees, etc., play a very important part in Hawaiian poetry, chants, and contemporary music. For example, the serenity and peacefulness of the rainforest or the caldera are some of the attributes that make those places special. Proactive and careful management of commercial air tours is crucial to protecting the sanctity of these sites.

In addition to the cultural reasons impelling protection of these parks from air tours, park visitors who seek out solitude in these parks also desire better management of noisy overflights. More than a third of the park's 333,000 acres are designated wilderness actively managed by the NPS (NPS Management Policies 2001) to take into account wilderness characteristics and values, including the primeval character and influence of the wilderness; the preservation of natural conditions (including the lack of human-made noise); and assurances that there would be outstanding opportunities for solitude, that the public would be provided with a primitive and unconfined type of recreational experience, and that wilderness would be preserved and used in an unimpaired condition. Lands within the Kahuku District have not yet been evaluated for wilderness designation.

Conclusion

With the 100th birthday of the National Park System approaching in 2016, we have a prime opportunity to renew our commitment to these national treasures and invest in their protection to ensure a healthy, happy birthday for the park system and the dedicated staff that continue to inspire the world. NPCA recently compiled a list of the Top 10 Reasons to Reinvest in America's National Park Heritage. But we really need only one; America's national parks, including the crown jewels of the Hawaiian Islands, are the legacy we leave to our children and to future generations.

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Hawaii National Parks Operations

Hawaii National Parks Operations										
	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	Increase	%	FY 2006	Increase	%	Change	%
NPS Unit	Enacted $	Enacted $	Estimate $	FY 04-05	Increase	Request $	FY 05-FY 06	Increase	FY 03-FY 06	Change
Haleakala NP	3,879	3,858	4,083	225	5.5	4,171	88	2.1	292	7
Hawaii Volcanoes NP	5,511	5,450	5,558	108	1.9	5,714	156	2.7	203	3.6
Kalaupapa NHP	2,493	2,471	2,536	65	2.6	2,585	49	1.9	92	3.6
Kaloko-Honokohau NHP	1,439	1,442	1,753	311	17.7	1,787	34	1.9	348	19.5
Pu'uhonua O Honaunau NHP	1,362	1,355	1,393	38	2.7	1,423	30	2.1	61	4.3
Puukohola Heiau NHS	592	590	607	17	2.8	626	19	3	34	5.4
U.S.S. Arizona Memorial	2,458	2,443	2,755	312	11.3	2,806	51	1.8	348	12.4
TOT					6.3			2.2		7.9

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